

SUCCESS STORY

Logistics: At the Heart of USAID's Response to the Haiti Earthquake

Procure, Transport, Deliver, and Distribute



Photo: Sara Schomig

USAID logisticsians purchase and transport emergency household items, like water containers, plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, and other items to Haiti. They then coordinate with the U.S. military to prioritize the delivery of those goods to persons affected by the earthquake.

A team of six veteran logisticians managed the movement and delivery of USAID's humanitarian relief commodities. They worked day and night to keep the airport and national port operational, support the Urban Search and Rescue Teams, and coordinate with all branches of the U.S. military.

When the 7.0 earthquake struck the capital region of Haiti on January 12, 2010, USAID logisticsians immediately set to work. In less than 24 hours, one of USAID's highly skilled logisticsians was on the ground in Port-au-Prince. Her first priority was to restart airport operations so that the USAID-supported Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams could arrive and begin their life-saving efforts. This meant directing planes alongside members of the U.S. Air Force's Special Operations Command and offloading more than 100 tons of search and rescue equipment in 48 hours, at first with no forklifts or ground-handling crews.

Over the course of 72 hours, veteran logisticsians seconded from the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department joined USAID on the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). Each of the six logisticsians played an essential role: serving as the civilian bridge among the U.S. military, the U.N., and the non-governmental community; directing airport operations and port operations; reporting; and providing USAR, medical, and pharmaceutical logistics support.

Working day and night, the team resolved congestion at the airport, landing and offloading more than 38 planes filled with USAID humanitarian relief items and countless other flights for other organizations. USAID logisticsians also facilitated U.N. and NGO requests for U.S. military helicopter assets to deliver items and personnel to hard-to-access areas. Supported by colleagues in Washington, DC, they prioritized procurement decisions and selected the best means to transport goods to Haiti.

At the National Port, a USAID/DART member, the first international logisticsian to arrive on site, served as the chief coordinator for the reception of humanitarian cargo arriving by vessel and set the parameters for the U.S. military's port operations.

The work USAID logisticsians accomplished behind the scenes enabled the international community to respond quickly and efficiently to humanitarian needs brought about by the devastating earthquake.